

Toilet and Bath

You should plan to take a bath (which can really mean washing with a handheld shower) every day. Japan has a humid climate and showering daily will keep you cool, keep your bedding clean and keep you from getting a heat rash.

In Japan, the bath and toilet are in separate rooms. The bathing area usually has an inner and an outer room. The outer room has the sink where you brush your teeth and may also contain the laundry area. The inner room is where you wash yourself and is also the location of the soaking tub.

When you take a bath, leave your clothes on the floor or door handle or in a special basket in the outer room, so people will know you are in the inner room bath.

In the inner bathing room, you will sit on a plastic stool and wash yourself with a handheld shower, with the water going down a drain in the floor. Soap up and rinse off completely before getting into the soaking tub. The soaking tub is more like a “hot tub”, for relaxing at the end of the day. The water is not necessarily refilled daily and is re-heated with a special heater. (So, don't pull the plug after you use it.) There is a cover for keeping in the heat. You don't have to soak if you don't want to, but try it at least once.

At Labo Camp, all the boys bathe together at the same time. Then, all the girls bathe. If you would be more comfortable bathing alone, tell the Lodge Mothers and they will make arrangements for you to bathe after all the other campers have finished.

Host family toilets are the sit-down style like the one you have at home. They are sometimes more high-tech, with heated seats and bidets (a spray of water to wash your bottom). The bidet button looks a bit like a drawing of a spray of water and shouldn't be pushed if you are not sitting down. If you don't understand the buttons on the toilet, ask your hosts to show you.

Most public places have at least one "western" toilet that is the same type as you use at school. The rest of the toilets may be in the floor and some people consider these to be healthier. If you have ever "hovered" over a toilet in a public restroom or outhouse, you can easily use one of those “squat toilets”.

Make sure that nothing will fall out of your pockets. Put one foot on each side of the toilet. Stand close to the flush handle (if you can't reach the toilet paper or handle, you are too far back), lower your pants and go just like you do while camping in the Alaskan woods. There is usually a handrail or wall if you need one for balance, or you can rest your arms on your thighs. It might sound unusual while you are reading this, but you will get the hang of it right away and be pretty proud of yourself for using a traditional style Japanese toilet.

Some toilet rooms in public places like train stations do not have soap, paper towels or toilet paper. Always carry a small package of tissues and some hand sanitizer with you in your day bag or pocket. Everyone does this, and you might even see someone standing on a street corner handing out free packages of tissues containing advertising. Many people also carry a washcloth-sized towel in their bag, for drying their hands or for wiping away sweat on a hot day.